

HARD CURVE TO HIT

Harry Howell Describes the Puzzling Spitball.

CALLED UNHITTABLE PITCH

Crack St. Louis American Twirler, Who Is One of the Greatest Examples of the Moistened Deceiver, Gives Illuminating Description of the Curve—Does Not Hurt Arm.

BY HARRY HOWELL.
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Although the "spitball" has had a vogue, now some three years old, among baseball players, no thoroughly illuminating description of this almost unhittable device of the pitchers has been given the reading public which takes an interest in baseball. At least I have never read anything that at all approaches a lucid explanation or description of the ball, and I read a great deal of baseball news.

I shall endeavor to describe, as far as lies in my power, and as far as the carrying virtues of ink and paper will allow, what the spitball really is.

Elmer Stricklett, a Californian, later with Brooklyn, accidentally discovered the virtues of the ball. He noticed, as had most pitchers, that on days when the grass was wet, the ball took curious shots. Many pitchers and players had noticed the same thing, but Stricklett was the first man to dream of putting these puzzling accidental shots, deemed detrimental to a valuable portion of the pitcher's repertoire.

He tried wetting the ball with water, then moistening his fingers with saliva. He found saliva superior to mere water, owing to the amount of oil it contained.

Spitter's Sharp Break.

The great virtue of the spitball is that it breaks much more sharply than any curve ball, and that throwing it does not weary and stiffen the arm, which throwing the curve does. Another great merit the spitter possesses is that it comes to the batsman without revolving, and with a peculiar dead heaviness which makes it hard to drive even should he catch it fairly with the bat.

Being hit with a "spitter" is ten times worse than being hit with any other sort of ball, no matter how fast it may be. The "spitter" comes with the dull, dead penetrating heaviness of lead, while the curve balls have rotation or "english" upon them, take "bite" off the object they strike, and bounce away. Not so the "spitter." It has no "english" on it, and sinks dead.

One day last fall I threw a spitball to a batter. Spencer caught it. A runner was stealing second. Ed threw to stop him. He got his fingers upon the exact spot I had mine on—the moistened portion—and, losing control, hit me in the back as I stooped to let him throw over my head. That ball almost went through me. I could feel it for two months.

But I had mine on the moistened portion—and, losing control, hit me in the back as I stooped to let him throw over my head. That ball almost went through me. I could feel it for two months.

Must Not Grip Seams.

You must not touch the seams when you want to throw a spitter. This is an inversion of all pitching practices, for in throwing all other balls we want a good rough seam. If you want to throw a spitter never grip it between the seams.

You must not use a full swing, as when you throw the curve, or even a three-quarter motion of the arm. The spitter must be thrown with a smart, short motion of the shoulder, and a snap of the wrist. The fact that the two first fingers have really no influence upon the ball deprives it of life and spin. It goes away with good speed, but, being without spin, there is nothing in the ball itself to help carry it along.

Every one who has thrown a ball with any degree of skill appreciates how much a certain twist or spin helps it on its way. If you want to make a ball carry after you let it slip over the end of your two first fingers and give it a sort of flip that imparts an upward spin to it. The effect of this is that after the ball carries fifty feet or so it will catch the batted air and shoot up a bit. We call this the raise shoot. A most valuable pitching asset it is, too. Only the fastest men can get it, and it is a matter of luck with the best of them. Some days they have it and some days they do not.

Nichols, Young, Powell, Russe, and all the great fast fellows of the decade had this ball when at their best. It is an easy ball to throw and hard to hit, but, as I have previously remarked, hard to get. You must have speed and a certain dead touch to get it. If the wind is behind you it will not work. But the old spitter is always with you.

Inversion of the "Raise."

The spitball is almost an exact inversion of the old "raise." Instead of the fingers imparting a spin to the ball, they are lubricated. Use no influence whatever upon it. Therefore, the ball leaves your hand with absolutely no spin whatever upon it. As soon as the initial velocity imparted to it by your shoulder dies, it has nothing to carry it floating. So it "dunks," rather than shoots, and no living man can hit it.

I can truthfully say that I have never yet had a perfect spitball hit me. Sometimes they make a foul of one or hit it down to the infield, generally to the pitcher. As for driving a spitball that breaks right in to him has ever done it for me.

How hard it is to hit may be imagined when any catcher will tell you that it is sometimes impossible to catch, and that he is lucky to break it down with his mitt, even though he has the advantage of the batter on knowing what it is.

When your spitball fails to break it is a mark. It comes up with just enough speed and without a semblance of a curve. Then they hit it.

For control of it, I cannot exactly say a dollar with it, but I can break it in or out or down within a reasonable distance of the desired spot. I do this by moving my fingers to the left for an inch or to the right for an outshoot. In every case the downshoot, or "duck," accompanies the other.

Does Not Hurt Arm.

I like the ball, though many people say it hurts the arm. It never has hurt mine, and I use it as often as any man pitches. Two-thirds of all balls I throw are "spitters." Throwing the curve hurts me much more.

A good many pitchers lose their curve when they go to throwing "spitballs." This is due to the fact that they unconsciously cease to use the two first fingers, whereas the thumb develops and becomes stronger. I throw my curve without the use of the thumb at all, in the old school way of grasping it between the thumb and the fingers. This gets the thumb out of the way and makes the fingers work. This is why I have never lost my curve.

There is a lot of noise about the injury done to pitchers by the spitball. Because

HUBARD HEADS LIST

Has Batting Average of .636 in Marquette League.

E. COLLIFLOWER IS SECOND

Thirty-three Players Are Hitting Above .300 Per Cent—Moffitt, of St. Vincent's Team, and Frye, of St. Peter's, Champion Run Getters, with Eight Each to Their Credit.

Although Hubbard and E. Colliflower are third and fourth by actual figures, nevertheless they are the real leaders of the Marquette League with the stick.

E. Colliflower has figured in all but one of the games played by his team and has come through the fray with a most enviable record, .636. Hubbard, who tops him with .626, has figured in three games, and has shown form, which, if continued, will keep him well up with the leaders.

Gallagher and McIntyre, the first and second men in the averages, have played in but one game each, and have had no good opportunity to prove what they can do in the long run.

Of those who have played regularly, Dugan, St. Martin's fast outfielder, stands up next in order. Dugan has participated in five games and out of twenty-three to the bat has clouted out eleven safeties.

The leader of the 300 class has earned his good average. Moffitt is the most reliable hitter on the St. Vincent's team, and one of the best pinch hitters in the league, and it is seldom that he leaves a man on base when a hit will bring him in. He made one of the two clean home runs scored this year, but has not figured in as many games as Moffitt has.

Goodman, St. Martin's captain and first baseman, is another who has batted himself well up into the 300 class by steady hitting. Goodman is especially noted as a sacrifice hitter. He invariably follows Mess in the batting order, and it is safe to bet that if the little third baseman gets on base he will be advanced to second by Goodman.

In the team averages the fight for first place is unusually close. Notwithstanding the fact that it leads the league in games, St. Martin's yields the first place in the batting averages to Trinity by one point. St. Peter's is third, with nine points less than Trinity.

In compiling these averages it has been necessary to use the name of some players more than once, when he has played with teams other than the one with which he is signed. Unless his total average for games played with his own team and those played with other teams makes him eligible for one of the two classes his name has not been inserted. These averages include games up to June 7.

TEAM AVERAGES.

Team	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
St. Vincent's	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Peter's	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Martin's	1	3	2	2	.667
Trinity	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Joseph's	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Paul's	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Francis	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Ignace	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Charles	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Andrew	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Basil	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Clare	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Elizabeth	1	3	2	2	.667
St. John	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Luke	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Mark	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Matthew	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Michael	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Nicholas	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Patrick	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Raphael	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Timothy	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Ursula	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Veronica	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Wenceslaus	1	3	2	2	.667
St. Zenobius	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. VINCENT'S.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. PETER'S.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. MARTIN'S.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. JOSEPH'S.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

TRINITY.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. PAUL'S.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. FRANCIS.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. IGNACE.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. CHARLES.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. ANDREW.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667

ST. BASIL.

Player	G.	A.	R.	H.	P.
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667
Dugan	1	3	2	2	.667
Moffitt	1	3	2	2	.667
Frye	1	3	2	2	.667
McIntyre	1	3	2	2	.667
Hubbard	1	3	2	2	.667
Colliflower	1	3	2	2	.667
Goodman	1	3	2	2	.667